

## **FirstNet looks to issue final RFP by the end of 2015**

Urgent Communications By Donny Jackson

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[FirstNet](#) plans to conduct an Industry Day for potential vendors early next year and hopes to release a final request for proposal (RFP) by the end of 2015, a FirstNet official said yesterday during an [IWCE Urgent Communications](#) webinar examining the progress of the public-safety broadband project within states.

Amanda Hilliard, FirstNet's director of outreach, highlighted the recent release of the comprehensive request for information (RFI) and the public notice of preliminary legal interpretations, noting that FirstNet officials will be evaluating responses to the two public proceedings through the end of this year. Hilliard then outlined the timetable goals for 2015.

"We plan to hold an Industry Day in early 2015," Hilliard said during the second webinar in the "State of the States" series. "Following the Industry Day, we plan to release the draft RFP by the end of March—that's the current goal.

"Of course, the timeline is dependent on the number of responses we receive to the RFI and the public notice, as well as the depth and feedback through all of that process. Our goal is to put out a final RFP by the end of the calendar year 2015."

Hilliard also clarified that states and territories are permitted to use money from the State and Local Implementation Grant Program [SLIGP] being administered by the [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) (NTIA) to pay for help preparing responses to the RFI and public-notice proceedings.

In terms of state consultations, FirstNet has completed initial consultation meetings with Maryland and Minnesota, and the "beta test phase" of state consultations will conclude after initial meetings are conducted with Oregon and Washington later this month, Hilliard said.

“We’ll be using the pilots to streamline our process and finalize the best way to present information and collect information from the states,” she said.

FirstNet has initial consultation meetings scheduled with four other states—Montana, Utah, Iowa and Florida—by the end of the year, Hilliard said. Initial consultations meetings with 19 other states that have returned the prerequisite consultation checklist will be scheduled for 2015, she said.

Lori Stone, broadband coordinator for the state of Maryland, said she was pleased with FirstNet’s willingness to accept both positive and negative feedback about the state-consultation process “with open arms.” From a state perspective, Stone noted that “you can’t invite everybody” to the consultation meeting, so it is important to develop plans to communicate what occurs during consultation to other stakeholders.

Stone also noted that Maryland is part of the Mid-Atlantic Consortium for Interoperable Nationwide Advanced Communications (MACINAC), a five-state alliance formed to plan for FirstNet.

“We really believe that a multi-state approach with our partners can really have a great impact on how FirstNet is rolled out,” Stone said during the webinar, noting that MACINAC states can realize efficiencies and cost savings by sharing ideas and resources.

“It’s one group that we think has a really great, powerful voice for procurement, [interoperability](#) and building a sustainable model going forward.”

Darryl Anderson, the statewide interoperability coordinator for the state of Ohio, echoed this sentiment in noting that Ohio is working closely with other states in the Midwest region.

“We are working with FEMA Region V, and we have notified FirstNet that we have a desire to continue to work as a region,” Anderson said during the webinar. “We’ve also been told by the private-sector community that it makes sense for us to have a regional approach, because—from an impact point of view—that gives a lot more detail, a lot more coverage and

so forth.”

Anderson said Ohio has shared FirstNet-related information with officials in the state’s homeland-security region, but the decision has been made to delay outreach to county-level personnel until FirstNet’s plan is more solidified.

“I would envision, in the next six months or so—as these state consultations [are completed] and the RFIs and RFPs get answered—will be when we plan on getting very specific and going out to the county level to talk to our strategic partners,” Anderson said. “We’re waiting on a plan, and we’re as anxious for that plan as FirstNet is. As soon as that plan gets more clarity to it, then we’ll march out our county-by-county detailed briefings.”

In contrast, Oregon officials already have conducted 175 on-site discussions with local officials, according to Steve Noel, the FirstNet single point of contact (SPOC) for the state of Oregon.

“We try to get people to understand what’s happening with FirstNet,” Noel said during the webinar. “Even though we’ve been out quite a bit and have [spoken with] a lot of our stakeholders, we still have audiences where a lot of people still don’t know a whole lot about FirstNet.

“I would recommend that it’s never too early to start on this, because you start building [project] champions after the second or third time that they hear it.”

Although few key networking and business-model decisions have been made regarding FirstNet, Noel said stakeholders—both public safety and private sector—have approached him for advice about the best approaches they can take to ensure that current investments in infrastructure and applications can be integrated with FirstNet, when it becomes reality.

While such planning is advisable, state and local officials should not count on FirstNet [LTE](#) providing mission-critical voice services when making LMR investment decisions, even though LTE standards bodies are working to meet that need and equipment could be available within five years, according to Bill Schrier, the FirstNet SPOC for the state of Washington.

“Upgrade your LMR,” Schrier said during the webinar. “Don’t depend on LTE and mission-critical voice, which are going to be relatively new technologies even five years from now, for your critical response. Upgrade your LMR. We know how it works; we know it’s rock solid; and we need it.”

A replay of the webinar, which is sponsored by General Dynamic C4 Systems and moderated by Robert LeGrande LeGrande—founder of The Digital Decision consulting firm and former CTO for Washington, D.C.—is available at <http://event.on24.com/r.htm?e=851634&s=1&mp;k=3AFB2D85C378A43F81EA599224EED374>

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